DOWNTOWN PARKING POLICIES

City of Chicago

Chicago Plan Commission
January 1989

DOWNTOWN PARKING POLICIES

Adopted by the Chicago Plan Commission January 26, 1989

CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION

Committee on Central Area Parking

Leon D. Finney, Committee Chair
Mary M. Langdon, Commissioner
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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

NOTE: The policies and recommendations articulated in this document are advisory. Formal requirements for compliance with these policies will necessitate revisions in the Chicago Zoning Ordinance, as noted throughout the text.

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RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Chicago's Central Area needs an adequate supply of parking to assure the vitality of its office, retail, and entertainment markets; and

WHEREAS, Consideration for Chicago's street congestion, air quality, and general ambience require continued emphasis on public transit and vigilance that automobiles do not overwhelm the city's Central Area; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago Plan Commission is charged by City Ordinance with review of all applications to construct non-accessory parking facilities within the boundaries of the Central Area Parking District as planned developments; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago Plan Commission created the ad hoc Committee on Central Area Parking, under the chairmanship of Commissioner Leon D. Finney, to study the issues surrounding Central Area parking and to present a report to the Plan Commission, containing the Committee's findings and recommendations to guide the Plan Commission in carrying out its responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, The Committee on Central Area Parking has submitted its Final Report to the Plan Commission, having studied the aspects of Central Area parking for two years in consultation with concerned civic groups, environmental officials, transportation experts, parking facility operators and developers, and members of the public at large, including four public hearings; and

WHEREAS, The Recommendations and Policies contained in the Final Report of the Central Area Parking Committee strike a careful balance between the continuing need for off-street parking in the Central Area and creation of a healthful people-oriented downtown, are consistent with the City's overall planning policies, and have elicited broad support at public hearings;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION

THAT the Final Report of the Chicago Plan Commission's Committee on Central Area Parking be approved and adopted as a guide to the Plan Commission in its relevant future deliberations and decisions; and

THAT it is now the stated policy of the Chicago Plan Commission to:

Urge action by the City Council to expand the boundaries of the Central Area Parking District to include downtown peripheral areas;

Recommend no new non-accessory parking facilities in the Inner Core, and favor retention of existing accessory parking requirements in the Inner Core;

Promote the continued availability of parking in the peripheral and Outer Core zones of accessibility;

Direct most non-accessory parking facilities and increased accessory parking requirements to zones of accessibility in the peripheral areas;

Promote the availability of moderately-priced short-term parking in those areas of the Outer Core and Periphery which generate a specifically high demand; and

Urge action by the City Council to codify general siting and design performance criteria in the Zoning Ordinance.

Adopted: January 26, 1989

Elizabeth C. Hollander

ELIZABETH L. HOLLANDER,
Secretary

INTRODUCTION

As the focal point of the region and city, Chicago's central area contains a significant portion of the area's major commerce, employment and retail activity. The growth of these activities depends upon a transportation network that provides efficient access to the area. A major part of this network is the availability of parking to meet the demands of commuters, consumers and deliveries that travel by automobile to the Central Area. Parking in the downtown area is essential for sustaining the economic vitality of the Loop and the peripheral areas--South Loop, West Loop, River North and Streeterville.

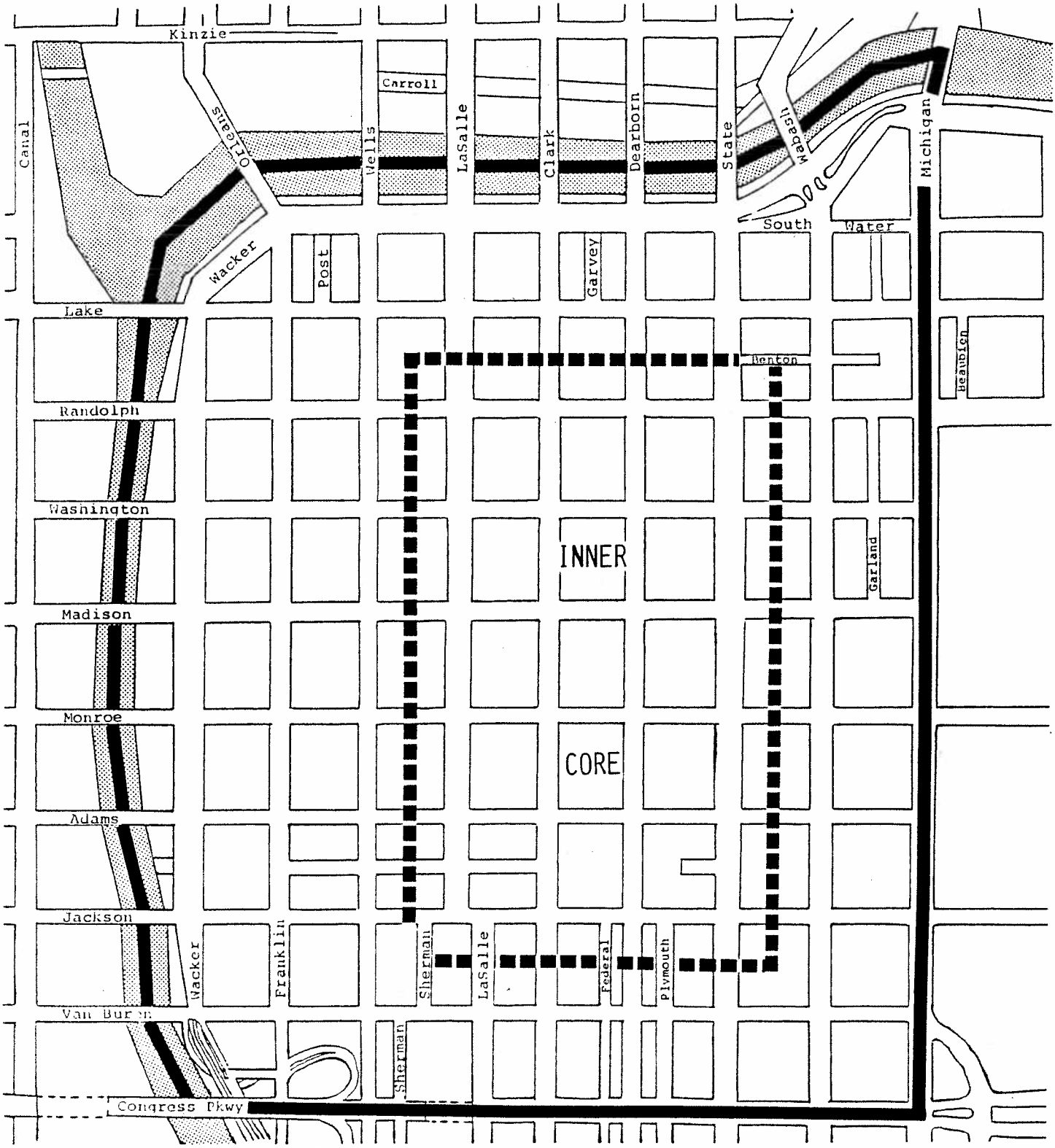
Chicago's downtown development continues to intensify at the core and is expanding beyond the traditional Loop boundaries. Parking policies conceived in the early Seventies need to be reconsidered in light of downtown expansion because of concern that future parking demand will outstrip parking supply. On the other hand, there is equal concern that changes in policy might stimulate too much parking, resulting in negative consequences: commuters might be lured off transit and into their cars; downtown air quality might deteriorate; and traffic congestion might worsen on downtown streets.

These growing concerns prompted the Chicago Plan Commission's review of downtown parking policy. The Commission formed the Committee on Central Area Parking to study the issues, recommend new strategies to guide Plan Commission decisions and propose changes to the zoning code that will address downtown parking needs into the next century.

BACKGROUND

Chicago's downtown parking policies emerged in the late Forties and early Fifties. As the popularity of the automobile grew, it became apparent that the problem of parking had to be addressed. As the Loop developed, increased parking had to be provided for the growing number of people arriving by car. At the same time congestion had to be minimized to ensure adequate access and circulation to the downtown. The City began an active program of constructing publicly owned facilities to fill the parking gap. However, in recent years the City has been selling many of these facilities for economic reasons, leaving the future parking facilities to the private sector.

In 1957, the City adopted its current zoning ordinance which regulated privately owned parking facilities. The Ordinance specified parking requirements in the Central Business District zoning districts. Non-accessory, or free-standing public parking facilities were allowed under the special-use zoning process. Each application was required to be reviewed and approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals before it could obtain a permit. The Ordinance also required a minimum number of accessory parking spaces to serve new development.



Map 1. Central Area Parking District

Existing Boundaries, Central Area Parking District

Inner Core

In 1972, the City adopted the Central Area Parking District (CAPD) Ordinance, an area bounded by the Chicago River on the north and west, Michigan Avenue to the east and Congress Parkway on the south, to control the growth of downtown parking spaces (See Map 1). This amendment made the following changes:

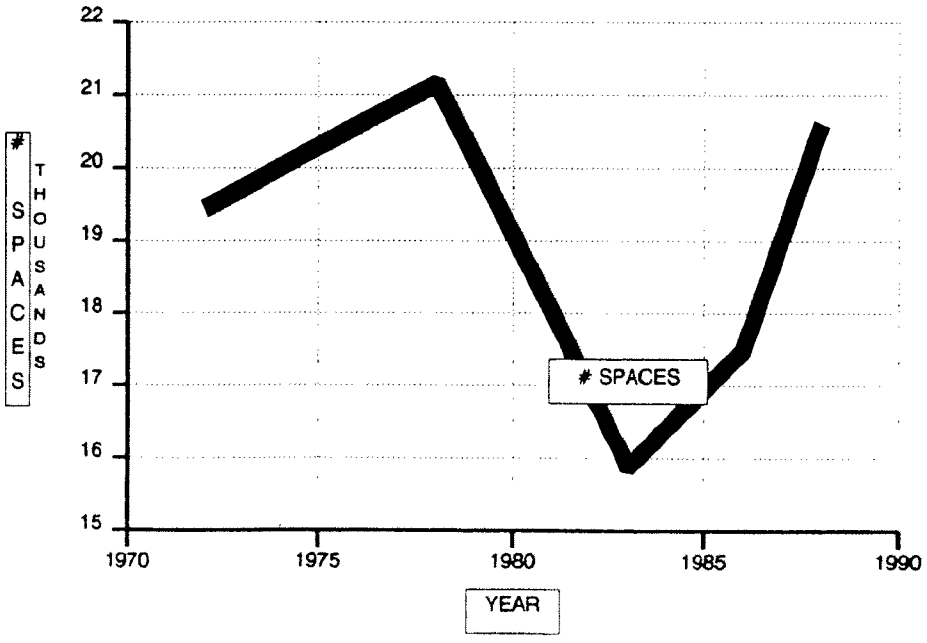
- Non-accessory, off-street parking facilities were not allowed as permitted or special uses in the CAPD.
- Required accessory parking that serves buildings or uses could be reduced to 80 percent of the minimum parking spaces required by the underlying zoning district.
- Further reductions in parking spaces could be taken by developers that constructed an underground pedway, underground parking facilities or direct access to a transit station.

The policy reflected Federal air quality mandates of the early Seventies. At that time, there was general consensus that reducing the supply of downtown parking would help reduce the concentrations of pollutants created by auto emissions. It also responded to the need to ease downtown traffic congestion and to encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation.

After a slight increase in the early Seventies, over 5,000 public parking spaces in the CAPD were eliminated between 1978 and 1983 (See Figure 1). At the same time, office development in the CAPD increased by 10.6 million square feet. This parking loss can be attributed to new development locating on parcels previously used for parking garages and surface lots coupled with a lack of replacement parking permitted in the CAPD.

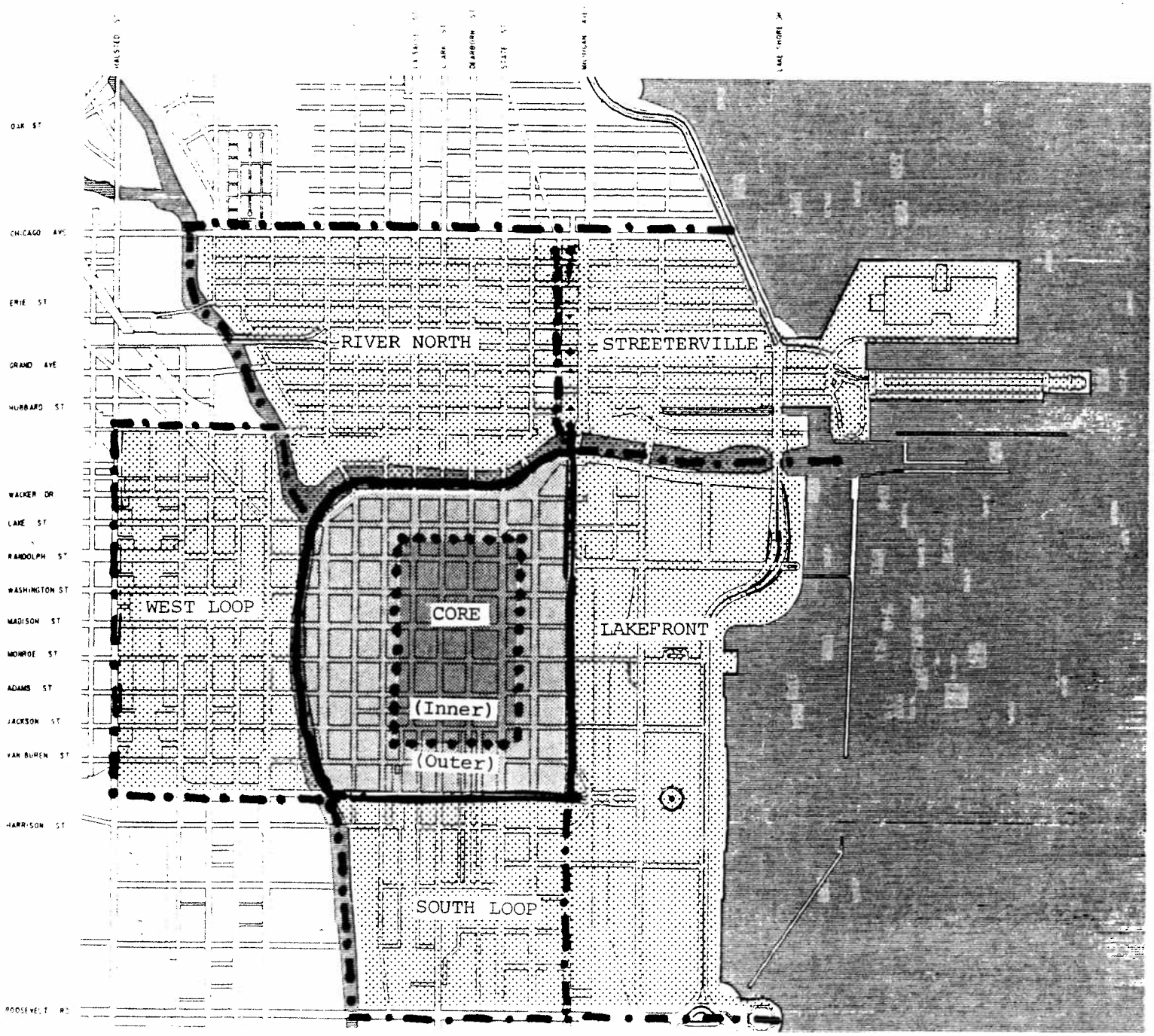
FIG. 1. PUBLIC PARKING SPACES IN CAPD

Accessory and Non-Accessory, 1972-1988



Map 2.

CENTRAL AREA PARKING POLICY STUDY AREAS



In response to concerns about the reduction in the total number of parking spaces, the CAPD was amended in 1983. The amendment lifted the prohibition on new non-accessory facility construction and permitted the construction of these facilities as long as the application is processed as a Planned Development. As a result of this change, total public parking spaces in the CAPD reached pre-1978 levels.

The Planned Development process allowed non-accessory parking facilities as a permissible use and allowed the City to evaluate the merits of each proposal based on its location and impact on the surrounding area. This required an advisory review by the Chicago Plan Commission and approval by the City Council. However, no criteria or policy was established to consistently evaluate each proposal or deal with the implications of downtown growth on the parking supply.

KEY FINDINGS

Today the Loop is growing into the SuperLoop. To assess the consequences of downtown expansion on parking demand and supply, the Committee extended its study area beyond the boundaries of the current Central Area Parking District (See Map 2). The study area was divided into three distinct subdistricts: the inner and outer core of the Central Area Parking District and the peripheral area that incorporates River North, Streeterville, South Loop and West Loop. The expanded boundaries recognize that the core and periphery have distinct development, traffic and parking conditions that need separate consideration.

The Committee reviewed the current situation from various perspectives: air quality, future development patterns, and transportation capacity and usage. The following section summarizes the Committee's key findings and their implications for developing a downtown parking policy.

PARKING SUPPLY AND DEMAND

FUTURE PARKING SUPPLY MAY NOT BE ADEQUATE TO SUPPORT THE INCREASED DEMAND GENERATED BY ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

As the scale of development and the number of employees within the overall Central Area continue to increase, the demand for parking spaces has grown and is forecasted to continue growing. Current zoning and Central Area Parking District regulations require developers to provide only a small fraction of the parking for which their developments generate demand, leaving a growing deficit. In the past, much of this deficit has been filled by increased parking just outside the core in the periphery. Even those spaces are being lost to new development. Further, some of the non-accessory parking facilities now under construction may be only temporary until the next downtown development boom when they will be lost to further development.

Parking Supply

In 1972, when the Central Area Parking District was established, there were 19,438 off-street accessory and non-accessory parking spaces within the Core's boundaries (See Map 3). That number rose to 21,157 by 1978 with the construction of several large accessory garages, but fell sharply to 15,973 in 1983, as non-accessory garages lost to new development were not replaced. Since the ban on all non-accessory garages was lifted in 1983, the number of off-street spaces has recovered to 17,484 in 1986, and 20,610 will be built by the end of 1988.

The supply of parking spaces in non-accessory garages--banned from 1972 to 1983 and restricted as Planned Developments since 1983--was sharply effected by these public actions. The number of non-accessory garage spaces went from a high of 12,739 in 1972 when the ban was instituted, to a low of 8,129 in 1983 and rebounding to 10,260 in 1988. The total supply of off-street parking spaces in the Core is now close to its 1978 peak, that is because accessory parking facilities have begun to take over the role of non-accessory garages in the Core parking supply. Approximately 65% of the Core (CAPD) off-street parking spaces were located in non-accessory garages, 20% in accessory garages and another 15% in surface lots. By the end of 1988, the share of Core off-street parking spaces provided by non-accessory garages will have fallen to 50%, while accessory garages will provide 39% and surface lots 11%.

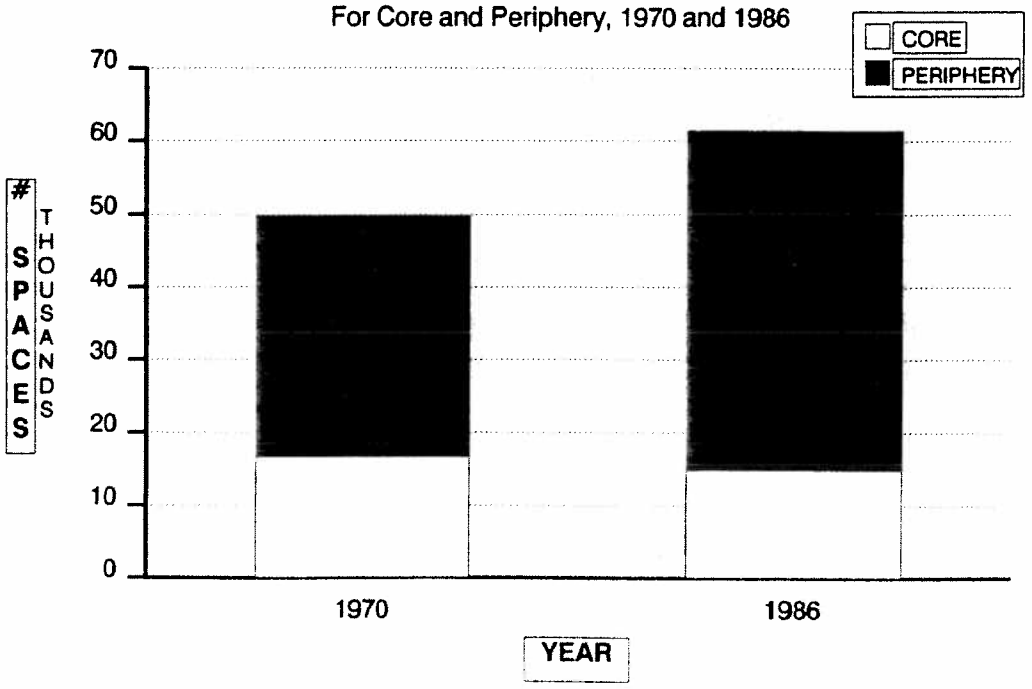
By 1988, off-street parking has been practically eliminated from the Inner Core of the Central Area. Only 10 of the Core's 101 parking facilities (1509 spaces) lie in the inner core; the other 91 parking facilities (19,101 spaces) are in the outer core. Of the ten remaining Inner-Core parking facilities, two are non-accessory public garages, seven are private accessory garages and one is a public lot.

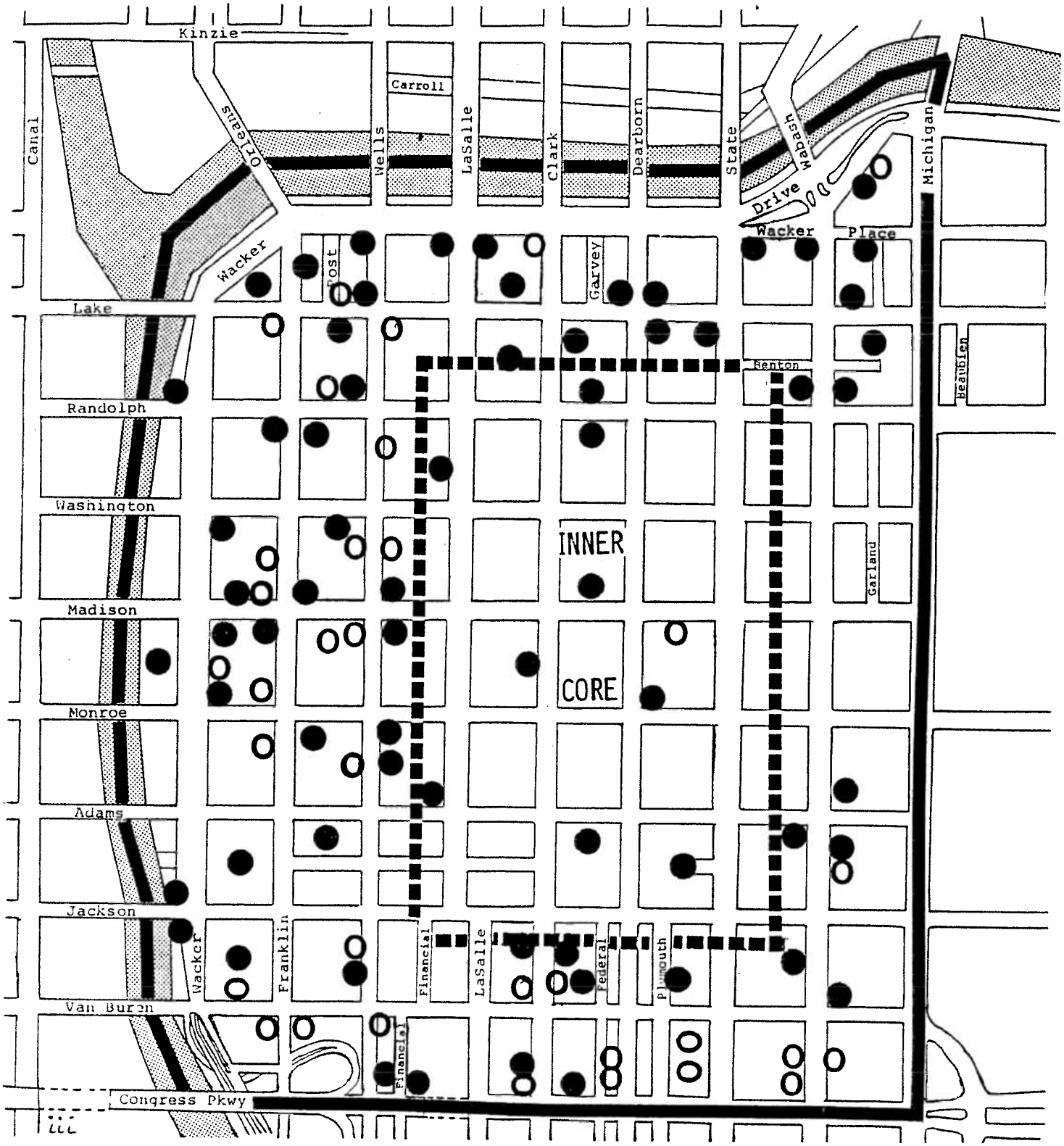
The current supply of public off-street parking spaces in the Core faces threats from three directions:

- Surface lots (11% of the present supply) are always in danger of being replaced with buildings as land prices rise and development opportunities materialize.
- A large share of accessory garages (39% of present supply) are run as private facilities for selected tenants.

FIG. 2. PUBLIC PARKING SPACES

For Core and Periphery, 1970 and 1986

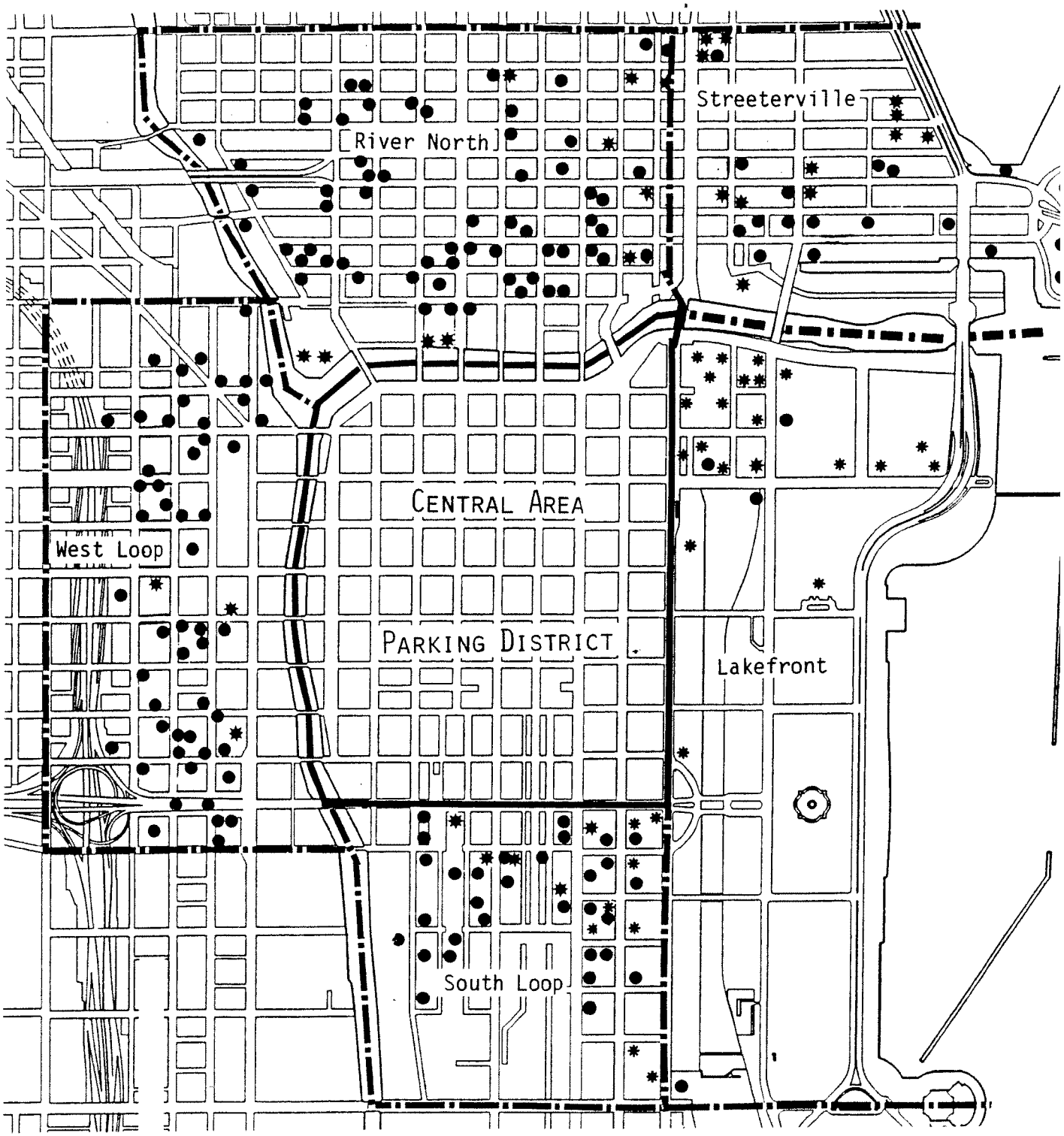




Map 3. Existing Parking Facilities, Central Area Parking District, 1988.

● Garages

O Surface Lots



Map 4. Public Parking Facilities on the Central Area Periphery.

✸ Garages

● Surface Lots

- Non-accessory garages (50% of present supply) which were once viewed as rather permanent parts of the parking supply are now becoming a form of temporary land holding, similar to surface parking lots.

The increasingly dense development of the Central Area core over the past two decades has been made possible, in part, by the availability of large amounts of public parking in the periphery (See Map 4). Between 1970 and 1986, the number of public parking spaces in the Central Area periphery rose from 33,444 to 46,605, an increase of 13,161 (39%). (See Figure 2) Of the periphery's 1986 total, 15,677 (34%) were in 131 surface parking lots which are most susceptible to development. In 1970, the periphery provided 67% of the total central area public parking spaces; in 1986, 77%.

Parking Demand

Downtown office development is expected to increase. By 1990, a total of 114.7 million square feet of office space will be completed in the Central Area (See Figure 3). By the year 2005, Applied Real Estate Analysis has forecast 44 million additional square feet of office space in the expanded downtown. The Core is expected to absorb the highest amount of growth (26 million/59%) with the West Loop following at 8 million/18%. While there will be a substantial demand for new office space over time, it will be at a slower pace because of an eventual maturation of the service and financial industries.

Additional development will translate into more commuters and subsequent parking demand. As shown in Table 1, a possible 40,000 new auto trips might be generated from projected new development given current auto use and vehicle occupany levels. The fact that parking supply is decreasing due to new development replacing lots that once served as short and long term parking facilities leads to concerns that the future parking supply may not serve those who: 1) rely on the auto to get to work due to poor transit accessibility or inconvenient transit scheduling and 2) visitors and shoppers who tend to drive rather than take public transit. This implies that, at the minimum, maintaining the parking supply is necessary to accommodate the needs of certain downtown users.

TRANSIT CAPACITY

THE TRANSIT SYSTEM IS OPTIMALLY SERVING THE CORE, BUT IS LESS EFFICIENT IN THE PERIPHERY. SCHEDULED TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS CAN ACCOMMODATE MOST PROJECTED GROWTH. HOWEVER, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT FUTURE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS AND THE PROPOSED DOWNTOWN DISTRIBUTOR SYSTEM CAN MEET THE ENTIRE TRANSPORTATION DEMANDS OF THE DOWNTOWN.

TABLE 1. PARKING DEMAND SCENARIO FOR CHICAGO CENTRAL AREA, YEAR 2005

DISTRICT	OFFICE SPACE GAIN (1) 1990-2005 FORECAST (Mill. S.F.)	EMPLOYEES GENERATED (2)	AUTO USE (3) (% Employees)	PARKING DEMAND GENERATED (4)
PERIPHERY Streeterville	4M	15,505	46%	5,095
River North	4M	15,505	56%	6,201
West Loop	8M	31,008	40%	8,860
South Loop	2M	7,752	58%	3,211
CORE+ILLINOIS CENTER	26M	100,775	27%	19,435
CENTRAL AREA	44M	170,545	33%	42,802

1) Office and Residential Space Demand Potential in the Chicago Central Area, 1990-2005. Applied Real Estate Analysis and Pannell Kerr Forster, 1987. (for the Chicago Department of Planning).

2) Employees Generated using 258 S.F. per employee. Building Owners and Managers Association, 1985.

3) U.S. Census, 1980. Unified Transportation Planning Package.

4) Parking Demand Generated: 1.4 Vehicle Load Factor for the Chicago Central Area Chicago Area Transportation Study, 1987.

Impact on Transit and Auto Usage

According to transportation experts, the balance between transit and auto usage to the core is optimal--75% of trips taken by transit and 25% taken by automobile. 54 percent of these trips to the CBD are work related, 36% are business or service oriented, and 10% are non-work related. This percentage of auto trips to the core is unlikely to decrease over time because there are certain commuters who will always drive downtown. These drivers to the core include:

- Frequent Drivers - commuters who drive to work every day to work due to a) poor transit access or inconvenient transit schedules b) those who find transit unattractive and; c) those for whom parking is cheap or free.
- Marginal Drivers - those who drive to work occasionally because they need their car for special business trips or for travel occurring outside of the normal peak periods.
- Visitors and Shoppers - those who tend to drive downtown during off peak periods and park for shorter periods than frequent and marginal drivers.

FIG. 3. PROJECTED DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

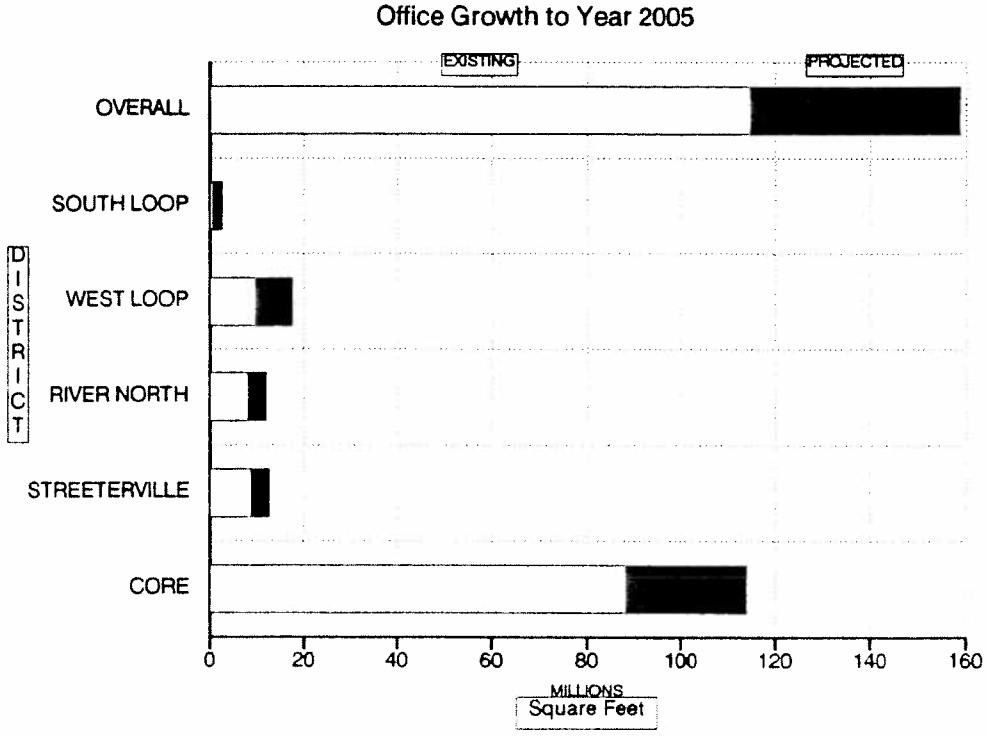
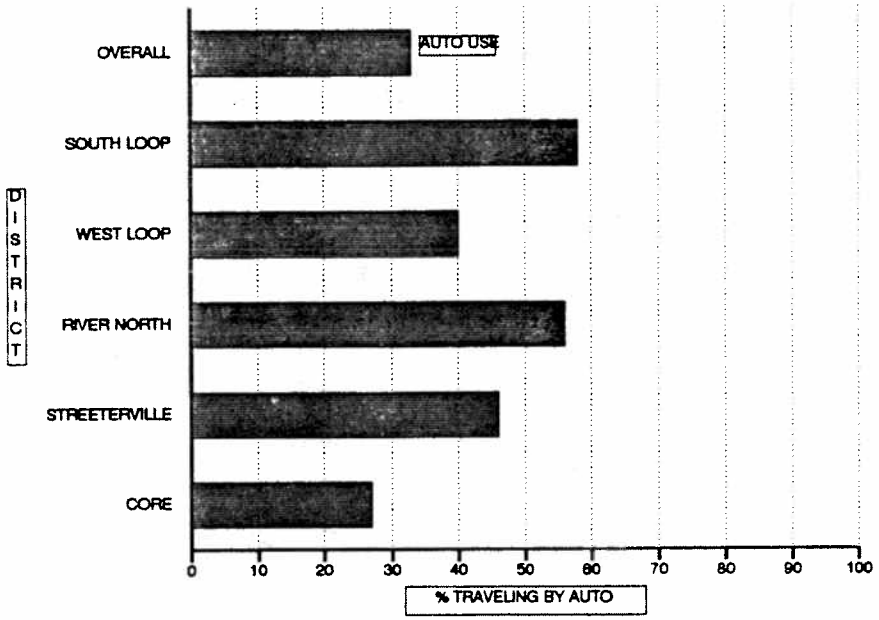


FIG. 4. % TRAVELING BY AUTOMOBILE
TO CHICAGO CENTRAL AREA, 1980

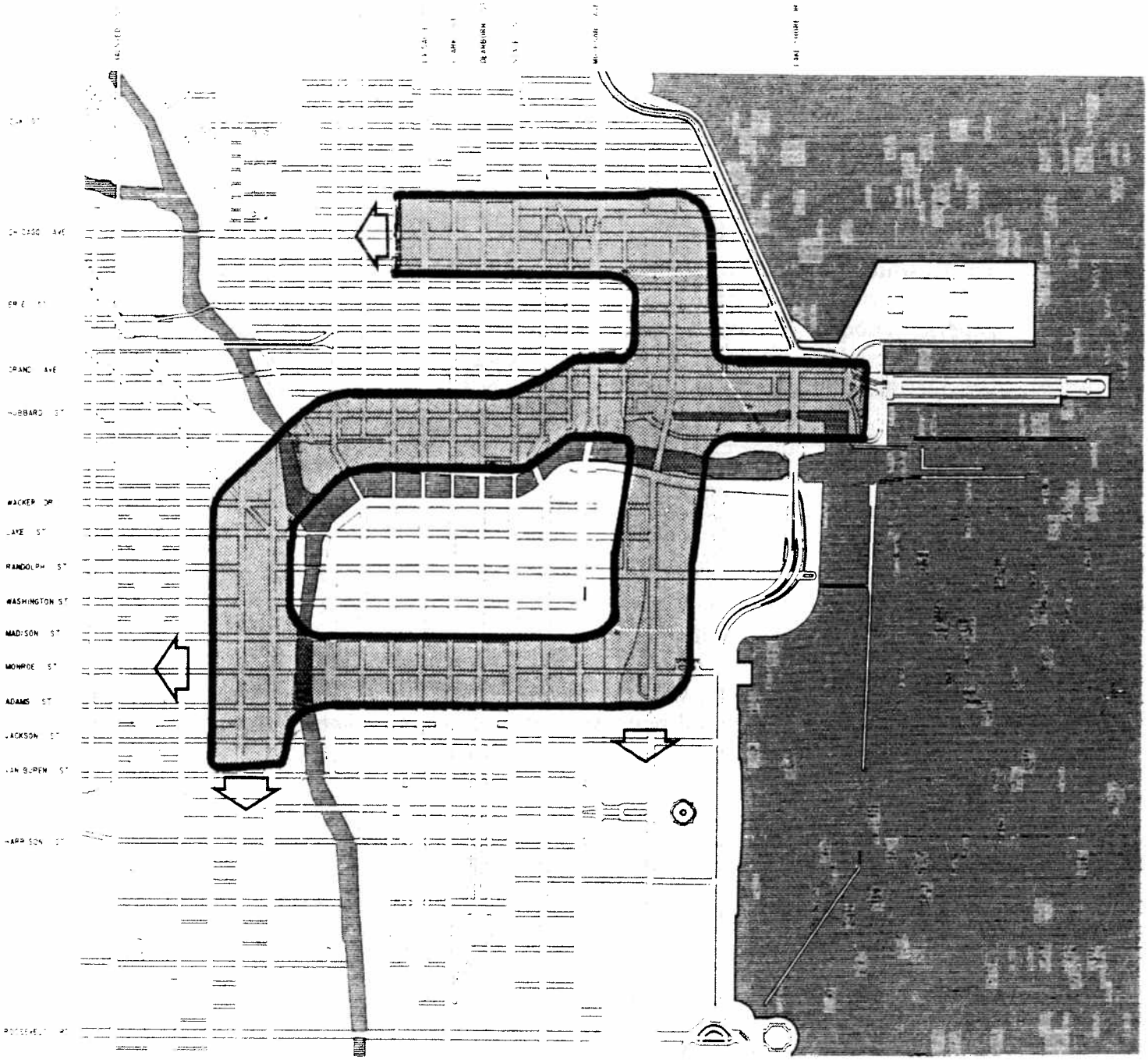


Because frequent auto drivers have limited access to transit and are highly dependent on their cars to get to work, many will continue to drive under almost any circumstance. In the face of further downtown growth and resulting congestion, it is possible that marginal drivers will be less inclined to drive if they are offered improved transit service. If they drive, they would have to be willing to endure an extended rush hour or extended travel time to and from work resulting from increased congestion.

It is expected that a good number of shoppers to State Street or North Michigan Avenue will continue to drive even if the parking supply were unavailable because of convenience, particularly if they have large or numerous packages to carry home. Visitors who may be unfamiliar with the City's transit system are also more likely to drive downtown.

Scheduled Transit Improvements

Existing rapid rail and commuter rail transit have excess capacity to absorb growth. However, the existing systems do not serve many areas of the downtown and need to be supplemented by means of a downtown transit distributor in order for each system to maintain its market share. The City's Downtown Transit Distribution Study (1985) indicates "though improvements will be made to the downtown transit system there is concern that improvements and continued adjustments to the transit system may not be adequate to meet existing and future needs of the downtown area, especially those intensely developed or to-be-developed areas outside the traditional Central Business District (CBD). For example, peak period surface transport, such as along North Michigan Avenue has deteriorated over the last few years due to slower bus operating speeds caused by the increase in nearby building development and concomitant in-



Map 5. Proposed Alignment of Downtown Distributor System, Phase I.

crease in demand for public transportation." Other areas that have poor transit service are River North, South Loop/McCormick Place, East Loop (Illinois Center/Cityfront) and Navy Pier.

To improve transit service to these areas, the City and other downtown groups are in the process of planning a Downtown Distributor System. While the actual alignments have not been selected, the system will link the commuter stations in the West Loop to high density development in Streeterville, Cityfront Center, Illinois Center and River North (See Map 5). If this system is implemented, it will improve access to these areas and can reduce auto trips generated by increased development in these areas.

The Downtown Transit Distribution Study indicates that although some CTA rail lines are quite crowded during the peak one-half hour period (e.g. Dan Ryan line), there is generally adequate capacity to handle existing demand. Moreover, the Howard/Dan Ryan connection and the new Southwest Transit Line capacity improvements will provide additional capacity. Although travel to the Central Area is projected to increase by the year 2000, the transit system should be able to accommodate much of this increase if planned improvements are made.

In addition, the RTA indicates that longer and more frequent trains can absorb the projected growth in commuter rail traffic. Most of their lines are now operating slightly under capacity. Most lines of the rapid transit system can handle an increase in traffic without deterioration in the quality of service. It is also important to note that the CTA has attempted to relieve auto traffic congestion by providing transit service to and from O'Hare airport and increasing transit service to residential areas close to the Central Area.The City recognizes that if transit becomes a more attractive alternative to auto usage, more people will be encouraged to commute downtown all the time. Thus, the City encourages and supports all efforts to improve the safety and cleanliness of the system.

EXPRESSWAY CAPACITY

THE EXPRESSWAY SYSTEM CAN ACCOMMODATE MORE TRAFFIC IF CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS AND MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES ARE ADOPTED.

Many of the City's expressways are at or near capacity during the one-hour peak periods in the morning and evening. If certain consequences are accepted, there is a degree of flexibility left in the expressway system and its complementary arterial streets during the two-hour peak periods to handle additional traffic volumes. The expressways leading to the downtown bring in approximately 50,000 vehicles per hour during the one-hour peak period. The expressways have the capacity to bring in up to 100,000 vehicles per 2 hour peak periods and some of these expressways are not at full capacity during the entire period. Along these expressways, there are different points of major congestion, with most delays occuring near the downtown. Additional capacity is available on the major thoroughfares such as Michigan/Indiana Avenue, Elston, Archer or Milwaukee Avenues, which function as alternative routes that lead into the downtown.

In the long-run, expressway congestion and lack of parking supply will discourage the number of auto trips that are made to the downtown. The Department of Public Works defines street congestion as follows: when the smooth flow of traffic is distrupted and/or average travel speeds fall below 45 miles per hour on a 55 mile per hour roadway. As the number of auto trips generated by downtown development increases, the trade-off that commuters will have to endure is longer rush hours or extended travel times to work. Providing better transit service can persuade some marginal drivers to shift in face of more expressway congestion and longer auto commutes. In addition, other management techniques, such as car-pooling and employee flex-time, might have to be adopted or improved to properly manage future demands on this system.

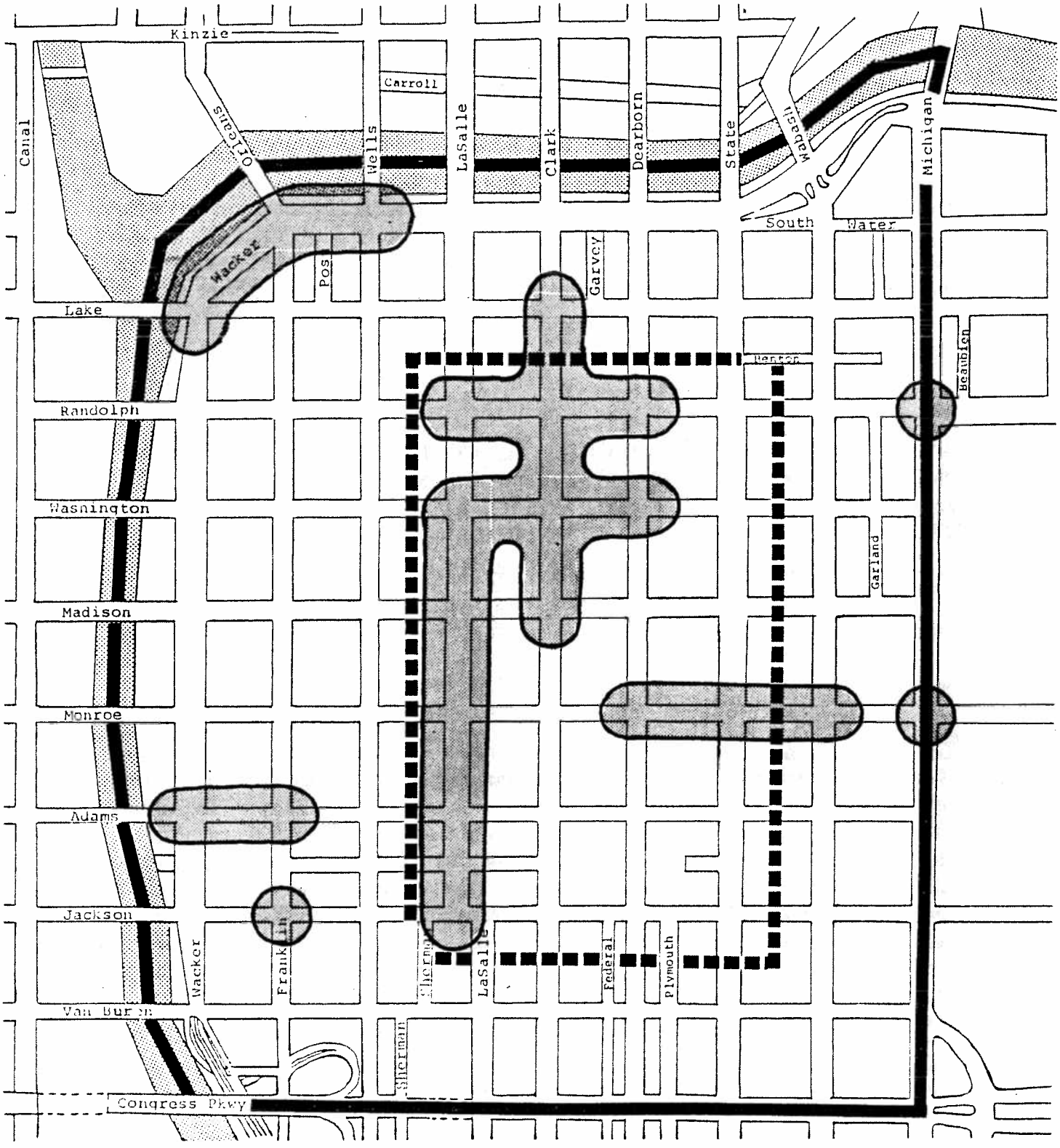
STREET CAPACITY

MANY STREETS IN THE INNER CORE ARE AT THE POINT OF GRIDLOCK. SOME OUTER-CORE AND MANY PERIPHERAL STREETS ARE LESS CONGESTED AND HAVE BETTER ACCESS TO MAJOR EXPRESSWAYS AND ARTERIALS.

Downtown street capacity is finite, and must accomodate other users, including emergency, transit and delivery vehicles. Many streets in the inner core are congested, particularly during the peak periods Traffic is generally worse during the noon hour. This is largely due to pedestrians in the intersections frustrating turning movements, narrowness of street lanes, and stop and go traffic. However, allowing additional parking facilities in the inner core could seriously worsen street conditions by adding more traffic. (See Map 6 for Areas of Congestion)

Pedestrian congestion is also a major concern with respect to parking facility location. High pedestrian volumes during peak hours generally can be found around the commuter rail stations, public plazas and most streets of the core area. Pedestrian circulation on sidewalks and intersections can interfere with autos turning into parking garages and create hazardous conditions for pedestrians. They create high levels of vehicular congestion which are unsuitable for locating parking facilities. The Department of Public Works defines street congestion as follows: a) acceptable -- 25 to 40 second delay at traffic light or travel speed ranges from 13 to 18 miles per hour; b) approaching capacity -- 40 to 60 second delay at traffic or travel speed ranges from 7 to 9 miles per hour; c) gridlock--more than a 60 second delay at light or travel speed is below 7 miles per hour.

While parts of the outer core system are congested during the lunch and peak periods, it is better equipped to handle increased traffic and parking that serves the entire core area because of its easy access to the expressways. The peripheral street system is less crowded during peak periods and could handle increased traffic as well.



Map 6. Areas of Major Traffic Congestion.

Source: Chicago Police Department; Chicago Department of Public Works, Bureau of Traffic and Operations, 1986.

AIR QUALITY

WHILE AIR QUALITY IS A CRITICAL CONCERN, POLICIES TO REDUCE PARKING SUPPLY ARE NOT EXPECTED TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE DOWNTOWN AIR QUALITY.

In 1972, Federal mandates actively discouraged parking in the downtown area to improve air quality. Much of the local concerns focused on carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen problems. Potential growth in the downtown parking supply has led to the concern that increased availability would encourage more people to drive downtown rather than take transit and worsen these air quality problems. Since that time, these positions have been modified because:

- Improved emission controls, from catalytic converters and lead-free fuel, have significantly reduced passenger vehicular pollution emission. Transit buses and delivery trucks will soon be subject to stricter emissions standards in the 1990's which will continue to improve downtown air quality.
- Some transportation experts, including The National Academy of Sciences have reported that restrictive parking policies might aggravate emissions problems by forcing cars to circulate on downtown streets longer before they find a parking space.

Previous assumptions about the relationship of parking, auto trips and downtown air quality have been challenged. As indicated in previous sections, there are certain commuters that will continue to drive to the downtown regardless of parking availability. Efforts to reduce the parking supply can have the actual effect of worsening air quality because these cars will forced to run longer on the streets, producing more emissions as they look for parking. This implies that public policies should aim towards providing strategically located parking facilities to get cars off the street quickly, rather than reducing overall parking spaces.

The other major air quality concern is ozone. Chicago is one of 70 cities nationwide that is at non-attainment status for ozone and one of 14 cities without an approved plan for reaching attainment status. While car emissions are a leading source of ozone pollution, aggregate emissions on a regional basis and not downtown emissions are the problem. Unlike earlier concerns which focused on local or downtown-specific problems, the ozone problem must be solved regionally. There are other sources that contribute to poor air quality as well, such as stationary sources, plant emissions and area sources. In order for there to be a significant improvement in air quality, emissions from each of these sources would have to be reduced as well.

Air quality officials advise that the region must address its ozone problems within the next 5 to 7 years through a combination of measures. The ozone problem would be best alleviated by: 1) extending the boundaries (beyond Cook County and the eastern portion of DuPage) of the vehicle maintenance program (VMP); 2) include stiff penalties for tampering with auto emission controls within the VMP boundaries and 3) improve regulation and control of gasoline vapors from gas stations or places where gas is loaded.

The City will continue to monitor the relationship of its downtown parking supply and its impact on regional ozone as well as other local air quality problems by coordinating with the Illinois EPA Office. As the Federal Government determines an overall strategy to resolve the City's non-attainment status, this parking policy will be reevaluated

POLICIES

The Committee proposes four general policies that articulate goals for overall downtown transportation, short and long-term parking users needs, general location guidelines and site-specific design standards. The policies serve as guiding principles for Plan Commission decisions and proposed changes to the zoning code.

POLICY 1

PUBLIC TRANSIT SHOULD RECEIVE CONTINUED PRIORITY IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING FOR THE CENTRAL AREA.

Downtown Chicago should maintain its "transit first" orientation. The automobile should not become the primary mode of transportation for downtown users. Core development is well-served by a transit and parking system that is at a point of "equilibrium": an optimal modal split of 75% transit/25% automobile usage; garages are at 95% occupancy at peak periods; and some street and transit systems are near capacity. The large surface parking reservoirs in the peripheral areas have accommodated parking demand generated by intensified core development.

Improvements to transit service in the periphery can reduce future parking demand and ease potential street congestion. Implementation of the distributor system can connect existing transit services that bring people to the Central Area to a system that deliver commuters near their destination points. It will also help the City deal with its air quality problems by encouraging more transit usage while decreasing downtown auto-trips and parking demand.

To accommodate future growth, the City should:

- Focus much of its transportation investments for transit infrastructure, including vigorous support and promotion of the downtown distributor, to accommodate the increasing transportation demands of downtown users. The distributor can serve peripheral parking areas as well as reduce the need for people who have multiple destinations downtown to constantly move their cars from one parking facility to the next.
- Maintain high transit usage through long-term transportation and development plans for the Central Area and its districts. Do not employ any public policies or actions that would discourage or reduce transit usage.
- Periodically monitor downtown parking supply and use of public transit. If it is found that the availability of parking is reducing transit use, parking policies should be adjusted to promote transit.

- As a long term objective, explore the use of a transit contribution fund as a means of promoting safe, clean and efficient transportation service. For example, instead of providing required accessory parking, a developer could contribute to a City Parking Fund whose dollars would be used to improve the transit system.
- Work with the CTA to provide transit improvements for buildings (e.g. place bus stops outside building exits and entrances, dedicate easements, etc.)

POLICY 2

ENCOURAGE PARKING FACILITIES TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF CERTAIN DOWNTOWN USERS.

A major concern is providing close-in, short term parking that serves the needs of downtown visitors and shoppers. Redevelopment of the outer-core and peripheral parking facilities can reduce these strategically located spaces. The city should accommodate the priority needs of downtown users--shoppers, short-term office visitors and tourists--by encouraging facilities near their destination points. This is especially critical around the State Street and North Michigan retail areas. These users are least likely to rely on public transit and need an adequate supply of parking within walking distance to ensure the vitality of downtown businesses.

While the Committee recognizes that zoning controls cannot strongly influence marketing and pricing of these facilities, it recommends several steps to ensure that these spaces are available to short-term parkers:

- The City should work with the Chicago Park District to encourage parking for short-term users in the Grant Park garages. A portion of the garage could be set-aside (by opening later or changing pricing) to accommodate mid-day users.
- In addition, special consideration should be made for those private operators that promise to set-aside spaces for short term visitors near State Street or North Michigan Avenue retail areas. This can be negotiated through the Planned Development process to ensure spaces for short term users.
- Long term parking for those downtown commuters who choose to drive to work will be accommodated in facilities located in the peripheral area
- As a long term objective, the City should investigate the feasibility of constructing garages through revenue bonds or in-lieu payments. This program would essentially allow developers to contribute to a City fund whose proceeds would be used to construct new parking garages for designated areas. For example, if the regulations and requirements for off-street parking would result in practical difficulty or undue hardship, the developer

could opt to contribute to a general parking fund. This is not an immediate solution to the parking supply problem, but could become a viable alternative in the future.

POLICY 3

PERMIT NON-ACCESSORY AND MAJOR ACCESSORY PARKING FACILITIES TO LOCATE ONLY IN "ZONES OF ACCESSIBILITY" STRATEGICALLY SITUATED THROUGHOUT THE CENTRAL AREA.

While additional facilities will be needed downtown, their location should be carefully considered. The Committee determined that placing a "cap" or limit on the amount of downtown parking would not be desirable at this time because of future concerns of a loss of parking spaces and the fact that air quality would not be seriously threatened if the City does not place numerical limits on parking spaces.

However, the Committee recognizes that parking facilities should be systematically located and concentrated in zones of accessibility to reduce parking search patterns and subsequent Central Area traffic congestion. This will move cars off the street and into parking facilities more quickly, reducing unneccessary emission and traffic congestion. The City will prepare performance standards to be used to identify potential zones throughout the Central Area. Recommendation 6 proposes several standards to be incorporated into the Chicago Zoning Ordinance that implement the Zone of Acessibility policy as performance standards. In addition, the City will prepare a long-term transportation plan that identifies identifies parking zones for the outer-core and each peripheral area.

The primary objective of the Zones of Accessibility is to keep traffic in the downtown flowing as quickly and efficiently as possible. Automobiles should have minimum travel time from point to point while having little impact on the efficient movement of transit and pedestrians. Some areas in the Central Area are less conducive to smooth traffic flow; therefore, placing parking facilities in these zones could further hamper street conditions. The forthcoming Downtown Parking Siting and Design Manual will explicitly define the problem areas as well as the ideal locations for parking facilities.

In general, the Zones of Accessibility will:

- Minimize congestion by organizing and controlling traffic patterns created by parking searches. The Zones should channel these vehicles into accessible and non-congested areas.
- Discourage traffic that passes through congested areas by strategically locating parking facilities according to these criteria:
  - Locate areas of parking that are easily accessible to expressway ramps and major arterials that lead in and out of the central area.

- Identify corridors where new traffic patterns created by parking facilities would not be forced into circuitous movements (created by one way streets). Do not allow these facilities if they force traffic into areas of congestion, impair circulation or create gridlock.
- Parking facilities and spaces should be distributed throughout the Central Area to distribute local auto traffic and provide parking spaces within walking distances to retail/visitor destination points.
- Parking facilities should not be overconcentrated in areas that would overload intersections and create congested streets.
- Encourage location of facilities near existing and proposed transit distributor facilities to encourage intermodal transfers.
- Encourage signage that clearly identifies the parking facility and capacity (e.g. facility "Full") to assist motorists searching for parking.

POLICY 4

PARKING FACILITIES LOCATED IN ZONES OF ACCESSIBILITY SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO SITING AND DESIGN GUIDELINES TO MINIMIZE IMPACT ON IMMEDIATE TRAFFIC CONDITIONS AND THE STREETSCAPE.

Parking facilities located in zones of accessibility should be scrutinized for their impacts on local street conditions and visual relationship to the streetscape. Each proposed facility should be designed against a set of specific guidelines that would minimize these impacts. The City is in the process of preparing a set of guidelines that will:

- Review proposed facilities against a set of site performance standards. The standards would focus on minimizing impacts on local street conditions. The performance criteria will address: location of exits and entrances, ticket dispensers and internal stacking reservoirs.
- Encourage exterior designs that are compatible with the surrounding streetscape and adjacent buildings. First floor designs should receive detailing that is carried to higher floors. The first floor should have retail or other commercial uses.
- Adopt new design and landscaping standards for surface parking facilities.
- The upcoming Near North Parking Study will include a Site and Design Manual which will explicitly define the qualitative and quantitative requirements for new parking facilities in the overall central area. The Manual will include discussion on functional design, pedestrian safety, physical impact, layout and construction and aesthetics. There will also be guidance on location of curb-cuts, driveway exits and entrances and examples of well-designed parking facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section proposes six major amendments to the Chicago Zoning Ordinance. These changes are aimed at codifying the general policy recommendations of the Committee (specific recommendations that require amendments to the Chicago Zoning Ordinance, Planned Development provisions or the Central Area Parking District are denoted by an asterick (*)). The Committee also recommends a number of long-term actions that might require more detailed study or coordination between the public and private sector.

RECOMMENDATION 1

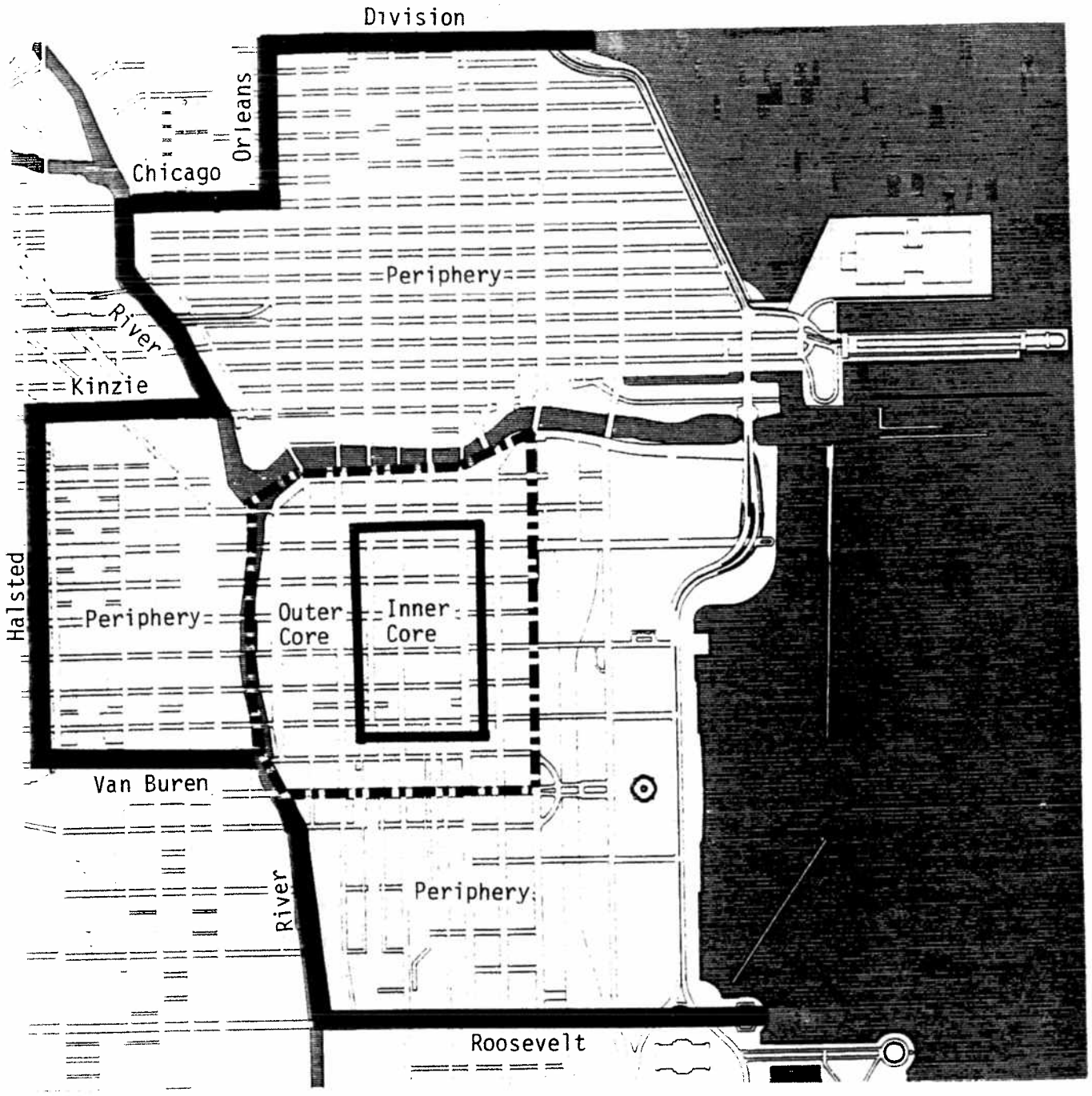
EXPAND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CENTRAL AREA PARKING DISTRICT ORDINANCE TO INCLUDE DOWNTOWN PERIPHERAL AREAS.

The Committee recommends the following amendment to the Central Area Parking District (Section 5.8-7):

- The boundaries of the Central Area Parking District should be expanded to Division Street from Lake Michigan on the east then west to Orleans Street, south to Chicago Avenue, west to the Chicago River, south to Kinzie Street, west to Halsted Street, south to Van Buren Street, east to the Chicago River, south to Roosevelt Road, east to Lake Michigan, and north to Division Street.* (See Map 7 for expanded boundaries)

The Central Area Parking District gives the City flexibility with respect to the location of downtown accessory and non-accessory parking facilities. Since the creation of the CAPD in 1972, rapid commercial and residential development has expanded Chicago's downtown to these boundaries. The Committee recognizes that downtown expansion into the periphery significantly changes each area's parking needs which might not be accommodated by the underlying zoning district. The boundaries shown in Map 7 reflect the areas of the downtown that are experiencing the most development pressure and parking demand; facilities in the area will serve future Central Area office, commercial and residential development.

The Planned Development review process would allow the City to review each proposal against "Zones of Accessibility" performance standards and other design guidelines. (The Plan Commission would review these projects through the Planned Development Process.)



Map 7. Proposed Expanded Central Area Parking District (CAPD)

Proposed Expanded CAPD Boundaries

Existing CAPD Boundaries

Inner Core

RECOMMENDATION 2

DO NOT PERMIT ANY NON-ACCESSORY PARKING FACILITIES AND RETAIN EXISTING ACCESSORY PARKING REQUIREMENTS IN THE INNER-CORE DUE TO CONGESTION AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION CONCERNS.

The following provisions should be amended to the Central Area Parking District ordinance:

- The City should not allow any non-accessory parking facilities in the inner-core and not allow replacement of existing non-accessory facilities as they are phased out (See Map 1 for boundaries).*
- Surface parking facilities should not be permitted or replaced in the inner-core.*
- Retain existing accessory parking requirements and the 20% reduction of accessory parking in order to minimize parking spaces in the inner-core.

The City's priority is to maintain auto and pedestrian circulation within the most congested part of the central area. The inner-core has the most congested streets and intersections, in terms of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Parking facilities in the inner-core would disrupt vehicular circulation by encouraging parking searches and stacking on the street. They also disrupt pedestrian circulation through curbcuts and automobile turning movements into the facilities. Allowing parking in the inner-core violates the overall zone of accessibility concept because of the area's poor accessibility to major arterials and expressways.

RECOMMENDATION 3

PRESERVE THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARKING IN OUTER-CORE AND PERIPHERAL ZONES OF ACCESSIBILITY THAT SERVES ALL CORE AREA DEVELOPMENT.

The following should be amended to the Central Area Parking District as regulations for outer-core parking:

- Allow non-accessory parking facilities within outer-core and peripheral zones of accessibility since many areas of the outer-core have easy access to major arterials and expressways.
- Raise accessory parking requirements for outer-core development by deleting the 20% parking reduction for accessory parking for the outer core and peripheral areas.*

- Permit surface parking lots in zones of accessibility if these lots meet strict design and landscape standards. Approvals for all new or expanded surface parking lots in the Outer Core should expire three years from the date they are published in the City Council Journal. The Commissioner of Planning may grant additional one-year renewals, up to a total of five years from the original permission, if the Commissioner of Planning finds that the surface lot in question has been operated in a manner consistent with all of the provisions of the original Planned Development, is acceptable given existing traffic conditions in the area, and that the petitioner demonstrates sufficient need for the extension.*

The City should maintain the relationship of outer-core parking facilities serving overall core area development. Currently, most non-accessory facilities that serve the core have historically ringed the inner-core on "parking streets": i.e., Wells, Van Buren, Wabash and Lake. The City should also encourage strategic location of facilities that serve short-term parkers for State Street retailing in this outer-core ring.

In addition, parking requirements should be increased to meet future growth of both inner and outer-core development. Close-in, non-accessory parking facilities are the most threatened because of growth and competing land-uses. As surface lots and non-accessory facilities are redeveloped, accessory parking will become a more predominant form of parking and pick up most of the demand. An adequate supply of permanent parking in the area can be ensured by increasing minimum accessory parking requirements.

The detrimental effects of surface parking facilities upon the fabric and character of Chicago's Central Area Core often outweigh any parking benefits that they provide. Within the Core, surface parking lots break up the dense continuous concentration of ground-level activity which gives life and vitality to the streetscape and encourages demolition of older buildings which house many of the Central Area's support services and functions. Often, surface lots which have been originally well landscaped and screened eventually deteriorate because the City has no means to enforce their maintenance. Surface lots proliferate curb cuts and associated pedestrian/auto conflicts without adding significantly to the parking supply. In 1988, surface lots constituted one-third of all Core parking facilities (34 out of 101), but only 11% of the parking spaces (2,365 out of 20,610). Note that Recommendation 2 already calls for the complete prohibition of all surface parking lots in the Inner Core.

However, the City recognizes that surface parking lots play a vital role in site assembly and clearance aspects of the downtown development process. In light of development needs, the Commission is willing to entertain <u>interim</u> surface lots in the Outer Core to assist that process in the case of active development proposals if they meet performance siting and design standards. These lots will be scrutinized for their traffic impact and urban design consequences. A three year limit, with possible extensions to a total of <u>five years</u> should be sufficient to accomplish the developer's objective. If a developer feels that a project would take longer than five years to commence, then

he/she should consider retaining the existing buildings on the site, or replacing them with small commercial structures which can be removed when development is ready to proceed.

RECOMMENDATION 4

DIRECT MOST NON-ACCESSORY PARKING FACILITIES AND INCREASED ACCESSORY PARKING REQUIREMENTS TO ZONES OF ACCESSIBILITY LOCATED IN PERIPHERAL AREAS. THESE ACTIONS WILL MAINTAIN THE PERIPHERY AS A PARKING RESERVOIR FOR DOWNTOWN COMMUTERS. AT THE SAME TIME THEY WILL ADDRESS LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF THE PERIPHERAL AREA.

In the long-term, the Chicago Zoning Ordinance should be amended to accomplish the following:

- Modify accessory parking requirements in each of the peripheral districts to reflect differing transit and auto accessibility and development goals.* Future revisions of the underlying zoning code should generally advocate increase accessory parking requirements if the development meets zones of accessibility criteria. This is to protect the reservoir of long-term parking as future development in these areas replace existing parking facilities. The cumulative impact of future development on these areas will reduce this reservoir supply while increasing demand for parking for new developments.
- With the expansion of the Central Area Parking District to the peripheral areas, proposals for non-accessory parking garages and lots will become Planned Developments and subject to review by the Plan Commission.* These projects should be permitted if they meet design and location standards.

In the interim, the following policies will guide the Plan Commission's review of proposed development in the periphery with respect to parking:

- The Chicago Plan Commission should closely examine parking provisions in Planned Developments proposed for the peripheral areas on a case-by-case basis in light of the building use, demand generation, availability of parking in the area, economic viability, street capacities, transit accessibility and replacement parking.
- Also in the interim, the City should encourage applicants requesting rezoning in these peripheral areas from existing medium-density classifications (e.g. C3-5) to high density CBD zones (e.g. B7-6 or B7-7) to consider providing more parking spaces consistent with the more stringent medium-density zoning classification if they are in accessible zones (as defined in the performance criteria in Recommendation 6) and have use characteristics that require more parking spaces.

Parking facilities on the periphery of the Central Area perform a dual role in the overall supply; they provide much of the long-term parking for the core of the Central Area as well as meet the parking needs of local development. Each project in the periphery generates its own demand for parking: future projects which displace existing parking facilities also remove some of the current supply. The City should develop a long-term parking policy for the periphery which maintains a sufficient reservoir supply of parking for the overall Central Area, yet is sensitive to the conditions for specific areas and sites. Streeterville and the South Loop have obviously different characteristics in regard to street capacity, transit availability, local demand, etc. and a long-term policy will have to be sensitive to those differences.

The City has several studies in progress which will shed more light on the parking needs and capacity of the peripheral areas. These planning efforts include the Near North Parking Study, the Central Area Framework Plan (focusing on land-use), the Downtown Distributor Study and the Central Area Transportation Blueprint Plan. These efforts will detail future development and transportation goals for the peripheral areas. When these studies become available, the City will have the information necessary to propose modified parking requirements in the Zoning Code or a program of transit or parking contributions as an alternative to constructing parking facilities.

In the interim, the Plan Commission should pay special attention to parking provisions of the Planned Development applications in the peripheral area. As these applications are reviewed, the relevant factors of building use, parking demand generation, availability of parking in the area, existing traffic congestion, and transit access, should be used to determine appropriate parking requirements.

Also, the City will have to address the issue of zoning requests in the peripheral areas which effect changes in the parking requirements. Much of the periphery is zoned for manufacturing or medium density business or commercial uses (e.g. C3-5). Typically, these districts have higher minimum parking requirements than the high-density CBD zoning classifications that apply in the Core and require very few spaces (e.g. B7-6). If these parcels are rezoned to higher density zoning districts, the result is that fewer parking spaces will be required than under the original zoning. Developers in some peripheral areas seeking rezoning to high densities should be encouraged to provide parking to replace spaces on site as well as provide a number of parking spaces consistent with the original zoning. The City should take an especially close look at rezoning requests designed solely to reduce existing parking requirements. They should be granted only if transit availability and the special characteristics of the site and area warrant. Provision of off-site parking should be encouraged as an alternative to reducing the parking requirement wherever possible.

As the boundaries of the Central Area Parking District are extended to include the peripheral areas, applications for non-accessory parking facilities (garages and lots) in the periphery will come before the Plan Commission as Planned Developments, rather than as petitions to the Zoning Board of Appeals. They should be encouraged and approved where they meet the design and location standards which apply in the Core.

RECOMMENDATION 5

PROMOTE THE AVAILABILITY OF MODERATELY-PRICED SHORT-TERM PARKING IN THOSE AREAS OF THE OUTER-CORE AND PERIPHERY WHICH GENERATE A SPECIFICALLY HIGH DEMAND.

The City should append the following guideline to Section 11.11-2 of the Zoning Ordinance as it relates to Planned Developments:

- The Chicago Plan Commission should encourage developers of non-accessory parking facilities and other commercial/residential developers that locate in areas with especially high demand for short term parking to enter agreements with merchants and businesses to provide discounted short-term parking for customers and clients.*

In addition, the following suggestions to encourage more short-term parking will require coordination between city agencies and further study:

- The City should work with the Park District to establish a rate structure in parts of the Grant Park garages which encourage their use for short-term rather than long term parking.
- The City's present Parking Tax should be studied to identify ways it could be modified to promote short-term parking without any major loss to City revenues.

Certain parts of the Central Area have special needs for available, moderately priced short-term parking. Large retail areas, such as State Street and North Michigan Avenue; concentrations of offices for physicians, dentists, lawyers and accountants; government offices; and cultural facilities, such as the Art Institute and the new Central Library, all generate a particularly high demand for short-term parking (30 minutes to 2 hours). The viability of these areas is essential to the attractiveness and vitality of the Central Area, and that viability depends heavily on the availability of moderately priced short-term parking for customers, clients and patrons.

The availability of this kind of parking is least likely to cut into the use of public transit. These trips are typically made on an occasional, rather than daily basis, and made in the middle of the day, when transit schedules are less frequent and highways less congested than during rush hours. While the Committee supports efforts to increase transit use of occasional downtown visitors, it also recognizes that these users should have a higher-priority for the available, close-in parking spaces near these activity centers.

The Committee has already decided that it is not appropriate for it to attempt direct regulation of pricing parking facilities. However, the Plan Commission should continue its policy of encouraging those seeking to build both accessory and non-accessory parking facilities in areas of high demand for short-term parking to provide special short-term parking rates or enter into agreements with local stores and businesses to provide discounted parking spaces.

RECOMMENDATION 6

CODIFY GENERAL SITING AND DESIGN PERFORMANCE CRITERIA IN THE ZONING ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH A PREDICTABLE SET OF GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING FUTURE DOWNTOWN PARKING FACILITIES.

The Committee recommends appending the following design and siting criteria to the Chicago Zoning Ordinance's Planned Development guidelines (Section 11.11-2). These amendments would implement the Zones of Accessibility and parking facility design guideline recommendations:

- New parking facilities should be located where they will have minimal impact on the smooth flow of vehicular and pedestrian movements. The burden for proving that a new parking facility will not negatively impact these conditions will be placed upon the applicant. In reviewing Planned Development applications for new facilities, the Commissioner of Planning, the Chicago Plan Commission and the City Council shall give consideration to the following factors:
- Proximity of the proposed facility location with respect to:
  - Expressways and major arterial streets that lead in and out of the Central Area;
  - Other parking facilities in the area to avoid overconcentration of parking facilities on a single block or intersection;
  - Retail, entertainment or cultural activities with short-term parking needs;
  - Identified parking zones of accessibility that are mapped in future plans and studies prepared by the Department of Planning.
- Impact of the proposed facility on surrounding area conditions and local environment. The design of the facility should minimize impacts on local traffic and environmental conditions. Special consideration will be given to the facility's impact upon:
  - Existing and projected area development;
  - Pedestrian movements adjacent to the site;
  - Vehicular circulation and roadway capacity in the surrounding street grid;
  - Transit operations;
  - Deterioration of street and intersection conditions created by peak hour arrivals and departures to and from the facility;
  - Noise level and air quality.

- Design features provided by the development that ensure the safety of pedestrian, automobile and transit traffic. Special consideration will be given to facility features that minimize disruption on traffic circulation:
  - Internal vehicular stacking and location of ticket dispensers;
  - Location of curb-cuts and driveways and number of entrances and exits;
  - Location of mirrors and signs;
  - Signage and other markers that identify the location of entrances and capacity of the parking facility to the public;
  - Interior lighting and visibility of common areas;
  - Elevator and vestibule location;
  - Building set-backs;
  - Aisle and stall dimensions; safety aisles and slope of parking.
- Impact on parking supply and demand in the vicinity. If the applicant wishes to provide less than the minimum amount of parking required by the underlying zoning, the applicant must establish that there is a lower level of demand for parking generated by the proposed development or an adequate supply of parking will exist in the future within a three block radius to meet anticipated parking demand or availability of other public transportation alternatives. Special consideration will be given to applicants that provide replacement or additional parking if there is a City finding or policy that the surrounding area lacks sufficient parking spaces.
- Enhancement of the pedestrian environment. Special consideration will be given to facility designs that respect and improve the quality and character of the streetscape, including provision of at-grade retail uses and articulated streetwall treatments. Surface parking facilities should include landscaping or fencing to improve the appearance of the lot.

These amendments provide the Plan Commission and City Council with a legal framework for reviewing and approving the location of future downtown parking facilities on a case-by-case basis. They are also intended to implement the specific parking recommendations of downtown development plans, transportation studies and parking facility design guidelines as these studies become available. In the interim, the general siting and design criteria stated in the proposed amendments will guide the Plan Commission's review of parking facilities within the expanded Central Area Parking District. Future studies will identify mapped areas or locational performance standards for downtown Zones of Accessibility (preferred areas for parking facilities) and quantify design standards for downtown parking facilities that can be used to elaborate on adopted legal performance standards.

The Committee also recognizes that there is a need to request additional informational materials to conduct a thorough analysis of Planned Development applications with respect to parking. The City should require a Street Traffic Impact Study in cases where the development is located in areas of existing vehicular congestion or the development generates high volumes of traffic. This study would address the impact of the proposed development on projected traffic conditions based on cumulative growth of area development. The study identifies potential concerns based on anticipated traffic volumes generated by the development, trip assignments to the street network and subsequent street capacity impacts at critical intersections.

In addition, a Parking Impact Study may be requested if it is determined that the development is located in an area that has an existing shortage of off-street parking spaces or creates a significant increase in demand in the area. This study would estimate future parking demand, assess the future of local parking supply and alternative means of transportation and propose mitigating measures to accommodate future demand.

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